

SUNSHINE PERIOD

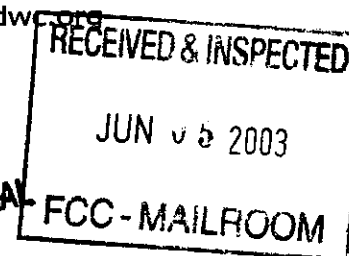
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

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27 May 2003

Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th St., S.W.
Room TW 204B
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Re: Informal Comments, MB Dkt. No. 02 277;
MM Dkt. No. 01 235; MM Dkt. No. 01 317; MM Dkt. No.
00 244

Dear Ms. Secretary:

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston submits the following informal comments in the above referenced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, released September 23, 2002.

The Diocese has long been concerned about the erosion of local news and public affairs programming caused by the FCC and Congress weakening of broadcast ownership limits, and the FCC's elimination of broadcast rules which formerly had permitted the FCC and the community to monitor broadcasters to help ensure that broadcasters served their community of license with programs which meet community needs and interests. In particular, in this Diocese, locally produced and locally directed religious programming, although wanted by the community, has all but disappeared, replaced by syndicated talk shows and infomercials.

The Diocese urges the FCC to refrain from making changes in the current rules which (a) prohibit cross ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same community, (b) limit the number of television and radio stations a single entity may own in a single community, (c) set a national ownership cap for television station at an already overly generous 35% of households, and (d) prohibit common ownership of major television networks. Cable television already is dominated by the same companies that dominate television and satellite systems and the programming on those systems, and those same companies are moving into providing Internet access. Neither cable nor the Internet (whether offered through cable or telephone companies) offer meaningful alternatives to the already scarce supply of truly local news and local public affairs programs on over the air television and radio.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael B. Grammer
Diocesan Spokesman &
Executive Director of Communications & Technology

Cc: Senator Robert C. Byrd
Senator John Rockefeller
Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito
Congressman Alan B. Mollohan
Congressman Nick J. Rahall II

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